

PLEASURE AND DREAD: THE PARADOX OF TRAVEL

by

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Date

Signature of Student

Jo Ankor

16 December 2009

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DEDICATION

To all the partners of Doctoral candidates who survived incremental loss and sudden reappearance – may they be bountifully rewarded for tenacity, endurance and always seeing the long view.

ABSTRACT

Both pleasure and dread lie in wait for the traveller. The willingness to embrace whichever of these may arise shapes the experience of travel. This thesis offers a multi-voiced exploration of this paradoxical relationship and seeks to develop a philosophical understanding of why we travel. Its intention is to expand the boundaries of tourism research methodologies and to suggest new ways of approaching the study of tourism.

This thesis begins in an observation of a personal experience of travelling by yacht, which brought contact with a group of people who had chosen to travel not because of what was known to be there, but precisely the opposite. This ‘unknown’ as destination was chosen because it was not known what may be found or what might happen. These travellers had set out, willingly accepting whatever may occur, seeking to meet face-to-face with the people and places that may arise – an acceptance of the paradoxical presence of both pleasure and dread. The focus of tourism research, on attractions, sights and services for example, does not appear to include travel which has no framework or specified purpose and which is specifically open to the surprise of the unexpected and the potential of the unpredictable.

Drawing on cultural studies, creativity studies and philosophy, an exploration is made of the unexpected and unpredictable moments of travel. Emmanuel Levinas’ (1969) philosophical analysis of the face-to-face encounter with the unknown ‘other’ offers an understanding of this encounter as where we can develop new meanings of our human position as subjects through a non-reductive relationship with difference. This leads to a consideration of the embodied and emplaced situation of the encounter in the experience of travel and a consideration that this encounter is critical to the development of new understanding of our relationship to the world and our own subjectivity.

Through the juxtaposition of narrative, academic and critical-creative writing, the contested nature of the relationship with difference is opened up in a manner usually restricted by tourism studies’ reliance on limited, dominant,

research approaches. This multi-vocal technique offers a fresh dimension to tourism studies research on the complex nature of the travel experience.

I suggest that the relationship of the individual and the ‘other’ lies at the heart of all travel and that the nexus of traveller, space and difference – self, context and other – is a key to understanding the travel choice to experience the unknown as destination.